25th January 1961]

Note.—**An asterisk (*) at the commencement of a speech indicates revision by the Member.]**

II. CALLING ATTENTION TO THE SERIOUS DAMAGE BY CATERPILLAR PEST TO CROPS MADURAI DISTRICT.

MR. SPEAKER : I have received a notice under rule 41 from the hon. Member Sri W. P. A. R. Chandrasekharan calling the attention of the Hon. Minister for Home to a matter of urgent public importance, viz., the serious damage caused by red hairy caterpillar pest to the dry crops in Dindigul, Nilakottai and Periakulam taluks in Madurai district.

The hon. Member Sri W. P. A. R. Chandrasekharan will now **speak.**

* **SRI W. P. A. R. CHANDRASEKHARAN** : கனம் சபாநாயகர் அவர்களே, மதுரை ஜில்லாவில், பெரியகுளம், நிலக்கோட்டை, திருமங்கலம், திண்டுக்கல் ஆகிய நான்கு தாலூகாக்களிலும் சென்ற ஆகஸ்டு—செப்டம்பர்—அக்டோபர் மாதங்களில் கம்பளி பூச்சி தோன்றி மிகப் பெரிய அளவில் விவசாயிகளுக்கு நஷ்டம் ஏற்படுத்தியிருக்கிறது. முக்கியமாக நிலக்கடலையும், எள்ளும் பாதிக்கப்பட்டிருக்கின்றன, என்பதைக் கனம் விவசாயத் துறை அமைச்சர் அவர்களுடைய கவனத்திற்குக் கொண்டுவர விரும்புகிறேன். அத்துடன், இடையே பயிரிடப்பட்டிருக்கும் கம்பு, மொச்சை முதலிய பயிர்களும் பாதிக்கப்பட்டிருக்கின்றன. இந்தப் பூச்சி வருஷா வருஷம் தோன்றி சேதம் விளைவித்து வந்தாலும் சென்ற தடவை இந்த நஷ்டம் மிகப் பெரிய அளவில், மிகப் பெரிய பகுதியில் ஏற்பட்டிருக்கிறது. சுமார் 17 லட்ச ரூபாய்க்கு மேல் மதுரை ஜில்லாவில் மட்டும் சென்ற ஆண்டில் நஷ்டம் ஏற்பட்டிருப்பதாக மதிப்பிடப்பட்டிருக்கிறது. இதில் என்ன கஷ்டம் இருக்கிறதென்றால், பாதிக்கப்பட்ட பகுதிகள் அத்தனைக்கும் ஒரே காலத்தில் அந்தத் தடுப்பு முறையைக் கையாண்டால்தான் நல்ல முறையில் பலன் ஏற்படும். ஆனால், சிறிய விவசாயிகள் குறைந்த விலையில் மருந்து விநியோகிக்கப் பட்டும்கூட, அந்த விலையில்கூட வாங்குவதற்குச் சக்தியற்றவர்களாக இருக்கிறார்கள். ஆகவே, இதை ஒரு pest infected area வாக டிக்ளேர் செய்து, தடுப்பு முறைகள் எடுப்பதற்கு பிரத்தியேகமாக சிப்பந்திகள் போடப்படவேண்டும். என்டொமாலஜிஸ்ட் என்ற ஒரு உத்தியோகஸ்தரை நியமித்து சர்க்காரே தங்களுடைய பிரச்சினையாக எடுத்து கம்பளிப் பூச்சி பூராவும் அற்று போகும் வரையில், சர்க்கார் செலவிலேயே, சர்க்கார் ஆட்களைக் கொண்டே நடவடிக்கை எடுக்கவேண்டுமென்று கேட்டுக்கொள்கிறேன். இது சம்பந்தமாக என்னைப் விச்சூக் கமிட்டி, மத்திய அரசாங்க நிலையிலும் நமது சர்க்கார் நிலையிலும் நிறுவப்பட்டிருக்கிறது. அதனுடைய யோசனையையும் கேட்டு, பணவரவு செலவுகளுக்கு என்ன செய்யவேண்டுமோ அதை அனுசரித்து சர்க்கார் உடனடியாக நடவடிக்கை எடுக்கவேண்டுமென்று கேட்டுக்கொள்கிறேன்.

[25th January 1961

* THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM : Sir, I would like to make the following statement :—

The red hairy caterpillar is a notorious pest affecting the groundnut crop in this State. It is endemic to certain red sandy areas of Coimbatore, Salem, South Arcot, North Arcot, Ramanathapuram and Madurai districts. The study of its like-history and control measures have been engaging the attention of the Agricultural Department for the last five decades. In the earlier years, mechanical methods of control like (i) hand-picking and destruction of the sluggish moths after monsoon showers, (ii) setting up of light traps and attracting them, (iii) hand-picking of the egg masses and (iv) trapping the caterpillars in the course of their march by digging trenches across the direction of their march were recommended. In the endemic areas of South and North Arcot districts, provisions of the Pest Act were also enforced, whenever found necessary. With the advent of potent pesticides in recent years, application of BHC 10 per cent at the most vulnerable stage of the development of the caterpillar, *i.e.*, when it is three to five days' old has been found to be very effective. The control of the grown-up caterpillars was, therefore, a problem though dusting Taxophene 20 per cent gave some relief. Spraying with more potent phosporous compounds like Folidol has also been found effective against the grown-up caterpillars. Since the groundnut crop is grown extensively under rainfed conditions, spraying of Folidol over large areas will not be practicable. More recent trials with dust formulation (2 per cent) of this chemical have however given encouraging results. Effectiveness of this and Paramar 1 per cent against this pest has still to be confirmed by large-scale field trials. Treatment with BHC 10 per cent at the vulnerable stage would be the most effective and economic method of dealing with this pest as it would cost only about Rs. 5 per acre. On the other hand it would cost more than Rs. 10 per acre to control the grown-up caterpillars with Parathion compounds. Sometimes, 2–3 breeds of this pest occur in succession. Under such conditions, two dusting BHC followed by one dusting with a Parathion compound would be necessary. Thus, even the most severe infestation of the pest can be effectively controled by systematic and timely treatment with the above pesticides. To render the control measures effective, it is very necessary to ensure that the operations are carried out at the proper stage and over the entire pest affected area. Otherwise, the efforts put forth by a few progressive farmers will become ineffective by the migration of the pest from the untreated fields in the neighbourhood. Thus, organising control measures on a community basis over the entire pest affected area is very essential for the success of the campaign work on this pest.

The District Agricultural Officer, Madurai, alerted the Block Development Officers on the possibility of occurrence of this pest in September 1960 and instructed them to maintain adequate stocks of the required pesticides in the Block Depots. On receipt of information about actual emergence of the pest in the first week

25th January 1961] [Sri M. Bhaktavatsalam]

of September 1960 he toured the affected areas with the Block Development Officers and Extension Officers and carried out intensive propaganda for adopting timely measures by addressing Village Leaders' Camps, Farmers Forum Meetings and Special Pest Campaign Meetings. An additional quantity of about 24 tons of pesticides (over and above the then available stock of 9 tons at Usilampatti) were also diverted from other centres. Parathion tubes 580 in number were also supplied to this depot for controlling the adult caterpillars. The emergence of the caterpillars were also announced by beat of tom-tom in the villages and the growers were requested to take up immediate control measures by the Plant Protection Staff, Extension Officers and Village Level Workers. Hand notices were also printed and distributed by the Block Development Officer, Chellampatti to the agriculturists. The Plant Protection Officers also toured the affected areas and arranged for field demonstration of the control measures at a number of places. Hence all possible steps were taken by the Departmental Officers and the Block Development Officers for the control of the pest.

Immediately on noting the emergence of caterpillars in the first week of September 1960, the Extension Officers proceeded to the affected villages and persuaded the groundnut growers to take up to the control measures immediately and warned them against the danger of not tackling the pest at the vulnerable stage. In spite of this warning, the growers did not heed to the warning and did not come forward to adopt the recommended control measures. Some of the growers were expecting good rains which in their opinion would destroy the pest completely. Such inaction and the false ideas on the part of the growers had aggravated the situation with the result that the caterpillars multiplied in considerable numbers within two weeks of their emergence and caused considerable damage to groundnut and other crops over vast areas. After this, a large section of the growers realised the danger and began rushing to the depots for pesticides. Since treatment with BHC 10 per cent is not effective in the case of well grown caterpillars, the damage to the groundnut crop continued uninterrupted in spite of dusting with BHC. Unwillingness on the part of some of them to carry out these measures also contributed to the ineffectiveness of the operations done by a good number of farmers as migration of caterpillars subsequently occured from untreated areas. Under these conditions, the damage by the pest became widespread and serious. Only in Kondanjinaickenpatti village the growers have dusted the crop with BHC on community basis and achieved fair amount of success. They also carried out the control measures in time. This example goes to emphasise the fact that only timely action on a community basis will ensure success of the control measures undertaken against this pest.

An area of nearly 11,000 acres in Chellampatti, Usilampatti and Sedapatti blocks were seriously affected by the Red Hairy Caterpillar pest. The area affected has been approximately estimated at 6 to 10 per cent and the loss in crop has been estimated

approximately at 2 per cent. Of these places, the Usilampatti taluk is the most seriously affected area. It is estimated approximately that nearly 23,000 acres have been affected in Usilampatti taluk alone and the loss is estimated at $11\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs of rupees. Judging from the off-take of the pesticides, it is estimated that more than 40 per cent of the affected area would have been treated with the pesticides. But owing to late application of the treatment and the disinclination on the part of some of them to adopt the recommended measures, the treatment given has not been fully effective. Since the crop over large areas was in fairly advanced stage of growth and had fairly good pod formation at the time of incidence of the pest, it is estimated that reduction in these cases would not be more than 10 to 15 per cent. But in the case of crops in the stage of flower production and initial pod setting (1–2 months old) the damage was expected to be rather serious. Even if seasonal conditions would become favourable, in the coming weeks, the yields might be only about 25 to 50 per cent of the normal. In the case of late sown crops (less than 1 month old) the damage by the pest was not appreciable. Taking on overall picture, it may be stated that the damage to crop nearly 10,000 acres of the early sown crops might be of the order of 2–5 bags per acre. The monetary value of this might be of the order of Rs. 7·5 lakhs. In this connection, it may be mentioned that dry weather during the pest-emergence period had been a real blessing in that adult caterpillars owing to the hard nature of the soil were not able to enter it. Thus millions of them perished owing to natural causes. It is therefore surmised that the incidence of this pest may not be so severe during 1961.

The Minister for Electricity personally visited the pest affected places in the Madurai district. The Joint Director of Agriculture who was deputed to tour the districts and submit a report in the matter to the Government is reported to have appraised the Minister of the position.

The Joint Director of Agriculture and the Collector of Madurai have suggested the measures given below for controlling the pest effectively in future and also in regard to certain concessions to be shown to the ryots affected by the pest.

Suggestions of the Joint Director of Agriculture.

1. In the advance of the normal time of emergence of the pest, intensive propaganda may be done by special staff to explain the groundnut growers the life history of the pest and the nature of damage caused and the remedial measures to be adopted. Local Committees at Block and Village level may also be constituted to implement the Campaign Programmes successfully;

2. Adequate quantities of pesticides and equipment may be stocked in the villages;

3. Concessional sale of pesticides may be done;

25th January 1961] [Sri M. Bhaktavatsalam]

4. Setting up of one Special Plant Protection Squad for oil seeds crops at Madurai with financial assistance of the I.C.O C. so that the Campaign can be organised well in advance and carried out immediately on noting the pest incidence;

5. The provisions of Pest Act may be strictly enforced so as not to leave any untreated pockets.

Suggestions of the Collector, Madurai.

6. Full remission may be granted for these growers whose crops have been seriously damaged, i.e., who have less than 4 annas crop;

7. The collection of arrears of all loans from the affected agriculturists may be postponed;

8. Block or Village Committees may be constituted for organising and executing the campaign work;

9. Sale of pesticides at concessional rates and issue of Takkavi loans to the agriculturists for their purchase; and

10. Supply of seeds at half-cost to the ryots during the next sowing season.

The Government have accepted the suggestions in items 1, 2, 5 and 8 above and the Director of Agriculture has been asked to implement them.

Regarding the suggestion in item 6 above, Revenue Department have proposed to grant a full dry remission in respect of groundnut crops affected by this pest, where the yield is four annas and below and half dry remission where the yield comes up to 8 annas.

As regard the suggestion in item 7 above, the Revenue Department, in accordance with the suggestions of the Board of Revenue, have proposed not to postpone the collection of loans.

The remaining suggestions in items 3 and 4 above are separately under consideration.

There is now no incidence of caterpillar in the fields. Egg masses are traced after thorough search. The crop is being either harvested or will be harvested in the course of a week. The staff of Agricultural Department and Community Development have been instructed to keep late-sown fields under close watch for the appearance of this pest.

III.—ANNOUNCEMENTS.

SITTING OF THE HOUSE.

MR. SPEAKER : I want to make an announcement. We meet on the 28th at 10 o'clock in the morning because hon. Members who go to their places would return by train in the morning on that day. So the House will meet on 28th between 10 to 1 and 3 to 5.